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COVER  
STORY

# Are You *Effective?*

*Dynamic managers have a high career -effectiveness' quotient*

By Sheryl S. Spanier

Many executives ignore their careers until they think they're in trouble. When conditions at work seem hopeless or unfair, they brush up their resumes and start networking furiously, generating lunches and calling recruiters who contacted them in the past. Soon, their work improves or an interesting project comes along and they drop the search.

For these executives, careers are like the tide, ebbing and flowing more or less on their own. They pay attention to their careers depending on how secure, happy or at risk they feel.

Conversely, effective executives stay flexible and in control of their careers. They do this by demonstrating six behaviors that help them make a favorable impact on others, behave effectively at work, deal with obstacles and earn promotions.

By taking the quiz on the next page, you can determine your level of these traits, or your "career-effectiveness" quotient. If you score below your desired level, reviewing the descriptions of the six critical-success qualities and ways to improve them may help.

## What's Your CEO?

Why do some executives seem so effective?

By observing them, these traits become apparent:

### 1. They're always self-marketing.

Effective executives see self-marketing as critical to achieving goals. They use the same

*Ms. Spanier, a career consultant in New York City,*

marketing and management practices as their businesses. Knowing that their accomplishments and efforts don't speak for themselves, they find ways to create visibility and the right buzz about themselves. They do this by expressing commitment, passion and excitement about their work, not by bragging or posturing to create an impression.

Such executives are people "who exude a natural energy and passion and commitment for what they do," explains Marie Mann, executive vice president and human-resources director of Saatchi and Saatchi, an international advertising firm based in London. "Their commitment is contagious and we tend to remember what they're talking about," she says.

People who quietly accomplish goals are overlooked because no one knows they're there. These modest merit-driven individuals often feel resentful and exploited when they're passed over for promotions or hot assignments. They ignore the need to position their achievements in others' minds.

Suppose you create and produce the best shampoo on the market. Without packaging, branding, marketing and sales,

no one will know about it. It's the same with work. You must market your merit so that decision-makers notice.

Many self-contained executives eschew the idea of self-marketing. They believe that their actions should be acknowledged naturally. While blatant self-promotion may seem distasteful, more subtle methods are equally effective. You might prepare a presentation or an article about a business innovation, volunteer to lead a committee working on a new project or review and summarize information to support a new venture. Just make sure the right people receive a copy of your work.

"Executives who communicate up and down in the organization are usually perceived as more open and effective," Ms. Mann says. "Part of that communication can include progress against organizational goals and key departmental accomplishments."

## Self-Marketing Worksheet

Effective career management requires planning and thought. You also must track your progress. To determine how well you recognize and market your achievements, ask yourself these questions:

What are the themes and patterns of my most recent and enjoyable projects?

Do I keep track of my achievements and discuss with my boss next steps and assignments that can build on these themes and patterns?

What approaches have I used in dealing with work issues-people, products and problems?

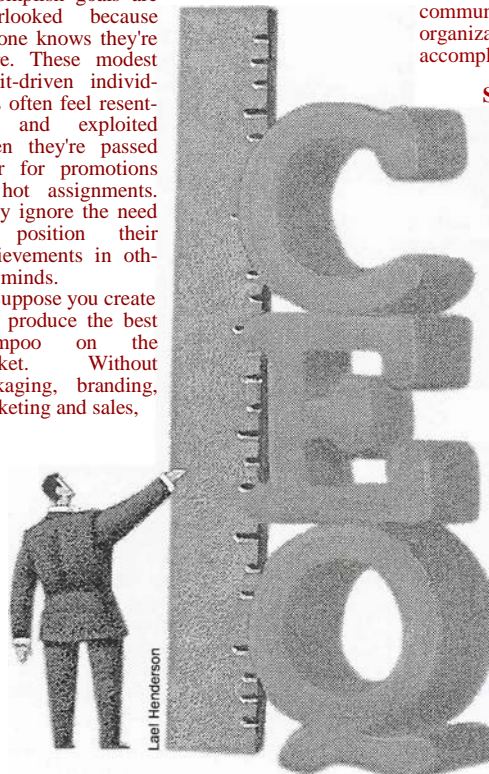
What key technical and personal capabilities do I bring to the workplace?

What results can I articulate and quantify?

Am I committed to my work?

Does my workplace support my contributions and development? If not, how do I make that happen?

Who knows about my recent accomplishments? Who should know? How do I make them aware?



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Who do I need to meet, cultivate and work with?

## 2. They put work in perspective.

How do you define yourself professionally? When asked what you do, how do you introduce yourself? Do you talk about the content or function of your work or do you provide the name of your employer?

Many people fall into the habit of thinking of themselves as connected to an employer, but if you over identify with a company or organization, you risk distorting your sense of self. Some people become so linked with their employer that they give up their lives for their job. When their employer fails to repay them for their sacrifices, they become resentful.

Effective executives don't have unrealistic expectations about the workplace. They know that a job well done doesn't automatically result in rewards and security. Derailment occurs when employees become indignant and dissatisfied because of unmet expectations. They get caught in a cycle of working harder and longer, only to feel unappreciated and exploited later on. Debby Gingher, vice president of human-resources policy and strategy at Prudential Life Insurance Co. in Newark, N.J., calls this the "perpetual workplace treadmill."

"Eventually they run out of steam," she says. "They can't compete with those who cross-train properly."

Effective executives don't subordinate their identity and desire to organizational agendas. They keep themselves appropriately aligned with work requirements without giving up their lives.

### Perspective Worksheet

If you feel trapped and bitter, your performance is being compromised or your advancement is blocked, ask yourself:

How can I redirect my attitude from dependence and dissatisfaction to independence and excitement?

What assignments or projects can I assume which will give me a boost?

What have I done outside of work to bring interest and creativity into my life?

What small things (interruptions, administrative tasks, disorganization or poorly performing subordinates) am I allowing to invade my space during the workday?

Am I taking steps to position myself instead of waiting to be discovered?

What work assignments or relationships do I need to pursue to broaden my internal or external marketability?

Am I led by shoulds or wants?

If you work out of obligation rather than desire, you're probably having difficulty feeling motivated to get the work done. Separate what you're drawn to achieve from what you're obligated to accomplish, then meet with your manager to see how you can connect the skills you enjoy to your performance objectives and the company's strategies and goals.

## 3. They're in charge of their image.

By their nature, organizations are highly regulated places designed to support their

## What's Your Career-Effectiveness Quotient?

Rate yourself from one to five on the following items, with five being the highest.

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am considered by my superiors to possess key attributes that are critical to the business.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I let others in my organization know how I can contribute to their successes.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I have a sense of satisfaction that my work is important and is appreciated.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I am loyal to my employer but realize that career management is my responsibility.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I am aware of how others perceive me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I am conscious about behaving according to the outcomes I desire.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I regularly assess my career progress and make plans to get to the next step.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I understand and build on my most marketable areas of expertise.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I make it a habit to develop relationships with colleagues within and outside of my company.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I have a reputation as someone who can be sought out and will deliver personally and professionally. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Scoring Yourself

40-50 points: You are highly effective. Read this article for confirmation only.

25-40 points: You have work to do. Read to elevate your effectiveness.

Below 25: You need to pay careful attention to your career. Read this article to create a starting point for developing your effectiveness.

founders' views and agendas. In effect, a military/sports model exists in most companies. They're places where you're expected to dress in certain ways, follow uniform rules and informal mores and use certain communication methods.

Savvy executives know they're likely to be viewed and categorized based on others' perceptions and judgments. This is the nature of office politics. They also realize that they need to work with others to achieve their goals, whether it's being a rainmaker, brilliant technical specialist or creative contributor.

## Effective executives treasure their connections. They don't just dust off their contact databases when job hunting

How they are perceived is critical to getting things done.

How you present yourself is a key aspect of creating and managing your reputation. Once you're typecast, it's difficult to change others' points of view. Start by seeking feedback on how others perceive you. This task may seem daunting at first, so start small. Ask a trusted co-worker to evaluate a presentation or contribution in a team meeting. Ask your boss for honest feedback about a

project you worked on, including how effectively you interacted with others or communicated your ideas. Even safer, ask him who he considers effective and why.

### Image Worksheet

To stay in control of how you're perceived, consider how you want to be known. Your answers to these self-assessment questions will help you create an effective presentation.

List five adjectives that describe how you want to be known in your organization; five adjectives that describe a successful executive in your company; and five adjectives that describe your company?

Compare these three lists.

What are the most essential attributes an executive needs to succeed in your organization? What are the mores and models of success? Are you willing to ally yourself with these criteria?

Your answers to these questions can help you decide if you need to make changes in your career. Effective executives initiate change; they don't wait for it to happen. Change doesn't have to mean leaving your organization. You may want to make an internal shift or change your behavior to re-energize your work life.

## 4. They build their portfolios.

For effective executives, the goal isn't a secure job. Instead, they seek to be marketable, useful and flexible. Their work then becomes a means to an end-not an end in itself. This keeps them from being co-opted

by a career or organization. They remain focused on achieving their goals in any work context.

One successful executive reviews his career portfolio every quarter. He identifies his areas of expertise based on recent assignments and accomplishments, lists individuals he's formed relationships with and evaluates his ability to handle difficult personnel, interpersonal or political situations.

Next, he identifies ways he can build his portfolio in the coming quarter. He seeks new assignments that might increase his expertise, visibility and relationships and other ways he can contribute to his organization. He also seeks feedback from others regarding his contributions and style.

Building a portfolio requires developing a sense of accountability about your career. With organizations becoming flatter and more focused on profits, executives are increasingly responsible for their own advancement. Building a portfolio of portable skills is critical to effectiveness.

#### Portfolio Worksheet

Ask yourself these questions:

What attributes and achievements do I want to develop in the next year? What should I concentrate on in the next quarter?

What skills and connections do I need to develop in my next assignment?

What research do I need to do to stay current and knowledgeable?

What are the trends in my chosen profession?

What will become obsolete? What will be needed?

What people do I need to meet or work with more? Who are my chief career stakeholders? Who has a vested interest in my success? Who might I help and who can benefit from helping me?

What are my economic and lifestyle goals over the next year? Am I in the right market? Are my assignments critical to my boss's agenda? What personal qualities, style factors and behaviors do I need to work on?

#### 5. They make realistic, self-aware career moves.

Resume polishing and circulating is becoming a hobby for some executives. But despite daydreaming about and researching their next moves, most stay put and unsatisfied. They fantasize about a better work life but don't create parameters for their next positions or plan how to get there. Further, they're often confused between work content and work context. Often, the source of their dissatisfaction is their organization, co-workers or work style, not their actual career.

While many career-book authors encourage readers to follow their passion, do work that they love or make a fortune in a hot new career track, the reality is that making a radical career change becomes more difficult as you move up the ladder.

Employers aren't interested in what you want to do; they want to know what you can do for them. Envisioning a dream career is useful only if you're willing to do what it takes to break into a new field. Trying to fit yourself into a hot new career is a recipe for frustration. A better approach is to review your background and ambitions, then decide what alternatives are realistic in the current market.

#### Career Management Worksheet

Many individuals confuse what they do with where they do it. People who are passionate and pragmatic—an unusual combination—and forge satisfying careers by applying some of these questions:

When was the last time I remember enjoying my work? What was I doing, with whom

and where? Describe in detail each of these elements.

Are you doing work that's consistent with your interests, capabilities and values?

Does your organization support this work and are you making a valued contribution?

What would you like to do professionally that you aren't doing now?

What have you done to make this happen?

What's getting in your way?

Are you in the most appropriate market for your expertise? Think about whether what you do and enjoy doing is supported and appreciated in your current work environment. You might be working hard but you won't be effective if your priorities and style don't match your boss's or clients'.

In selecting a new work assignment, these criteria are important:

What are the deliverables? What outcomes are required that will increase your expertise and broaden your skills and visibility?

What are the measurables? Will you be making or saving money or resources that you can document and emphasize to support your value?

What are the promotables? What will increase your ability to get where you want to go? Who will know about it?

## People who quietly accomplish goals are overlooked because no one knows they're there

### 6. They stay connected.

Some executives may resist this item because it seems like a plug for networking. But developing and nurturing relationships is probably the most important step to advancing in your career, receiving recognition, staying effective and enjoying what you do. Relationships are the links that connect you to your organization, your chosen profession, your community and your self-worth.

As work becomes more technically oriented, executives must be more interpersonally connected. Networks will be replaced by "webs" powerful yet delicate interwoven systems. Touching a part of the relationship web will cause reverberations throughout the system. One link will connect you to many more, some more valuable than others. Work is becoming more virtual, so we need others to provide stimulation and energy. By forming a web of individuals who are connected to you and each other, you'll receive a continuous source of information and support as you move ahead in your career.

Effective executives treasure their connections. They don't just dust off their contact databases when job hunting. They build and broaden their contacts by developing reciprocal relationships with colleagues, clients, customers and competitors through work. They view this as professional research and development, not networking out of need. They also stay connected by making contributions to their professions, industries, communities and charities. Because they seek to be helpful and supportive, they're seen as resources and sought out for ideas and information. When

they need advice or help, they can call on others in their web. They don't have to create network under pressure when they're needy vulnerable.

Chris Miller, executive vice president of the Magazine Publishers Association in New York has nurtured relationships with friends, classmates, colleagues and mentors throughout her career. Active in the alumni organization of her alma mater and a generous contributor to performing arts charities, she excels at introducing others and seeing them succeed. "I believe all change is initiated through people and therefore forming relationships and staying connected a priority," she says.

Web working is easier for introverts or shy executives than networking, which smacks of asking for favors or referrals from acquaintance. Web working emphasizes incremental and mutual activities that help create lasting and deep connections.

#### Connections

Examine your web:

Do you have an up-to-date database or Rolodex of contacts?

When was the last time you helped someone else with his/her career?

How active are you in your community, place of worship, charity or sport?

If you needed to provide references, would you know whom to list and be comfortable with your choices?

How often do you connect with peers a work?

When someone does a favor for you or offer information, how do you keep that person informed or in the loop? To what extent do you actively find ways to return favors?

Do you stay in touch with people you went to school with? Used to work with? Grew up with

How often do you review and renew your relationships?

Do you have a plan for building a relationship web?

#### Mobility Momentum

A job is what you do, not who you are or where you work. A career doesn't give you an identity. Instead, it articulates your skill, attributes, temperament and values in a work context. Work can be an expression of self—a practical application of your skills, desire, needs and style. The closer your work and these factors are allied, the greater the potential satisfaction. However, a job needn't be the only outlet for your occupational need, it's simply one structure in which you can work.

While most executives know that career security doesn't exist, many still believe that their work lives are stable. If a reorganization, management disruption or change of control jeopardizes their security, they feel betrayed.

Changing your expectations and embracing the fact that careers are fluid and you're always in play—whether within an organization or conducting an outside search—create "mobility momentum." Being ready for change and having the ability to anticipate and control it in a career requires analysis, strategy and motivation. Your responses to the quiz and worksheets can help you develop an effective career strategy.

Plan to build your career effectiveness and take your inventory again in six months. Just paying attention to the six career-effectiveness factors is bound to raise your score. .